

Eastern Montana Fire Alliance

Representing the Counties of:

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 2-27-07
HB 61

Carter
Custer
Dawson
Fallon
Garfield

McCone
Powder River
Prairie
Richland
Rosebud
Wibaux

February 6, 2007

House Bill NO. 61
Introduced by R. Erickson

Dear Rep. Erickson:

The Eastern Montana Fire Alliance is a group of Eastern Montana counties that meet regularly to discuss fire problems and issues that directly affect eastern Montana.

House Bill 61 has caught our attention in that if not passed has a high probability to adversely affect fire prevention and suppression in Eastern Montana.

The eleven counties of the Eastern Montana Fire Alliance would like to voice our support of House Bill 61.

Failure of House Bill 61 would reduce staffing, resources, reduce training, reduce fire prevention efforts. It would also add additional burdens to county fire departments that are already stretched thin due to limited revenues, equipment and manpower.

The Fire Wardens and Fire Chiefs of the eleven counties of the Eastern Montana Fire Alliance feel that failure of House Bill 61 would create the following adverse conditions to rural fire fighting efforts in Eastern Montana.

- 1- It is well documented that due to climate changes, drought conditions, increased recreation activity, and population growth in the rural areas, fires are growing in size, intensity and cost. Failure of House bill 61 will limit response and resources to fire suppression and add to size, cost and property loss. With property loss comes loss of taxable property, which cost the counties and state in tax revenues. It could also be argued that with increased fire loss the possibility of increased fire insurance cost could become a huge burden to property owners.

- 2- Failure of House Bill 61 and budget reductions within the DNRC Fire and Aviation program would also create possible safety issues for the responding local fire fighters, landowners and our federal cooperators that may be called to assist. This is due to increased hours on the line, lack of proper training, lack of adequate tools, equipment, lack of proper protective clothing.**

In addition, local firefighters may be faced with the necessity of attempting suppression efforts outside of the national recognized standards. If this becomes the case then our Federal cooperators will be reluctant to assist due to safety concerns and liability issues.

Again I want to make it perfectly clear that the eleven counties of Eastern Montana Fire Alliance whole heartily support passage of House Bill 61.

I respectfully request that you share and thoughts and supports of House Bill 61 with all concerned. If needed I am available to testify in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Doug Martens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doug" and the last name "Martens" clearly distinguishable.

**Doug Martens, Rosebud County Fire Warden
President
Eastern Montana Fire Alliance**

CC: John Sinrud

Signature page for support of House Bill 61:

Fire warden/Chief Raymond Hagon Fallon Co Rural Fire Chief Tom Mack
Groff Co Fire Derick Rodgers / Custer Co / Fire Warden
Fire Warden / Fire Chief Beery
McCONE County
Keith Hall Richland County
Attendant Chief West Glendene Fire Warden
DAWSON County Fire Warden
Bill March Prairie Co
Fire Warden / Chief
Joy Cathy FIRE WARDEN / CHIEF
POWDER RIVER COUNTY
Rusty Jardee
Carter County Fire Warden